Welcome

This Widening Access and Success Bulletin comes to you in the aftermath of our successful conference ‘Is Widening participation to HE enough?’. The packed programme enabled delegates to hear about the research and innovative initiatives being undertaken across the sector as well as addressing some of the ethical challenges that ‘targeting’ students in this way presents. We continue our aim to encourage debate and discussions through our regular seminar series which have seen presentations and round tables discussions on the black degree awarding gap, the experiences of carers and care experienced learners and soon, discussions around inclusive practice, where we will be delighted to welcome a pre-recorded presentation from our Australian colleague Jenny Stokes. What has illuminated these seminars is the involvement of our students in helping to understand how they experience Higher Education, the specific challenges they face and how HE providers can help to support them through their journey. The student voice brings a sense of reality to the work that we, as academics and practitioners which can sometimes feel hidden behind the data and evidence that policy-makers require us to report. Ensuring the student voice is heard across all aspects of our provision is particularly important for the OU, given that our students do not come together in the same way as in face to face institutions.

I hope you enjoy reading some of the work of our team and we look forward to continued networking and creative discussions as we transition into the world of the Office for Students.

Wendy Fowle
Senior Manager
Research and Evaluation (Widening Access and Success)
Chair Tyrell Golding updates us on Theme 1: Digital Inclusion and Theme 5: Ethical dilemmas of targeting widening participation students.

Shona Littlejohn Chair’s update on Theme 2: Progression – the social mobility conundrum and access to postgraduate studies.

Read the full blog here.

**WP Conference video 2018**

The conference video shows interviews with keynote speakers including Chris Millward, Office for Students; Micheal Hill, GMS London; Jacqueline Stevenson, Sheffield Hallam; Henry Seaton, English Football League and Huw Morris, Welsh Government. It also covers the poster session and pre-dinner speech from Pete Winkleman.
Scholarship on Progression from Access Module Y033 to First year Undergraduate Module S111

Case studies developed as part Office for Fair Access (OFFA) funded project seeking to understand the impact of access to HE for disadvantaged adult learners have been accepted for publication in a number of journals. The Case studies focussed upon progression from the Y033 Access module (Science, Technology and Maths) to the Level 1 (first year equivalent) S111 questions in Science and the National Network for Collaborative Outreach, HEFCE funded project to develop free online resources and the PEARL (Part-time Education for Adult learners returning to learn) website to support adult learners on their first steps into HE.


Butcher, J; Clarke, A; Wood, C; McPherson, E; Fowle, W, How does a STEM Access module prepare adult learners to succeed in undergraduate science?", Journal of Further and Higher Education. (in press)
Wendy Fowle and John Butcher will be presenting their paper ‘Taking me back to my schooldays’: understanding disadvantage better by talking with adult learners at the FACE conference being held at the University of Worcester on the 4th – 6th July. The paper combines the emerging findings from Wendy’s professional doctorate in education (EdD) with research undertaken by John exploring the experiences and support provided for part-time students and adult learners from disadvantaged backgrounds.

**Supporting widening participation students into an online learning environment**

This paper will report findings of a recent project to explore transitions from print-based to online learning within the unique model of the Access programme at the OU. Students who were currently or had recently finished their Access module were invited to complete the survey and participate in focus group to explore their experiences of the transition and the effectiveness of the support that they received. EADTU Conference 10-12th October 2018, Denmark.

**Supporting the Supporters: Caring and Care Experienced Learner Seminar**

A big thank you to all the speakers and delegates that attended the Care and Caring Experienced Learners seminar on 17th April 2018. The seminar was very insightful and our speakers Andrew Rawson from Action on Access, Mary Larkin from The University and Priya Clarke from Queen Mary's University gave key points in breaking down
barriers for students in Care or leaving Care in higher education and students studying with caring responsibilities. These included flexibility in recording seminars and lectures, support for students strategically embedded within the university and an understanding from tutors that these students will have fundamental different needs then other students.

The seminar included an inspiring talk from OU student Holly Harrod who spoke about caring full time for her husband whilst studying on her PHD. Nigal Patterson a student at the OU spoke about full time caring for his mother.

Please see the video produced by WAS communications coordinator Annie Hitchman with student speech and seminar outputs. All seminar outputs can be found on the YouTube playlist here.

“Carers pack” for students who are carers in Wales

Wendy Fowle is involved in the pilot project within Wales to encourage students to identify as carers. The project aims to:

- find out more about the needs of student carers
- offer specific support to carers to improve recruitment, completion, retention, progression and employability.
- feed findings from this project into the OU Care and Caring network
and generally help to inform University wide policy around best practice and systems for supporting carers.

Working closely with the OU Students Association and a group of student carers, the OU in Wales has developed an information pack for student carers. The finished pack contains a useful overview of information and support available to student carers as well as top tips from other student carers in Wales.

Through Carers Week (11-17 June), the OU in Wales will be working with OU Students Association to run an online forum and discussion group with student carers, providing a space for peer support, answering queries and offering support for students with caring responsibilities.

Although this project is currently running in Wales, the learning will be shared across the UK.

The carers pack can be found [here](#).

For more info contact Gayle.Hudson@open.ac.uk

---

**Dates for your diary**

**NEON Summer Symposium**
"Widening Access-who cares?", University of Sussex, 21st June and 22nd June 2018


**Wonkhe presents - Proceed with caution: Fees funding and the future of higher education**, Tuesday 3rd July, Royal Collage of Physicians, London

**FACE conference 2018: Transforming Impact**, 4-6th July,

---

**What's in the press?**

Are universities letting down black students? BBC News, 28th May 2018. [Read here](#)

2nd Special WP Conference 2018 blog: Chair’s update on Theme 1: Digital Inclusion and Theme 5: Ethical dilemmas of targeting widening participation students. 23rd May, Access Observatory blog. [Read here](#)

Special WP Conference 2018 Edition: Chair’s update on Theme 2: Progression - the social mobility conundrum and
access to postgraduate studies. 17th May, Access Observatory Blog, Read Here

Broadening the scope for outreach to include adult learners as well as 18 year olds. John Butcher HEA blog. Read here

Music education should be inclusive. So where are the disabled teachers? The Guardian, 13 April 2018 Read here

The Open University is incorporated by Royal Charter (RC 000391), an exempt charity in England & Wales, and a charity registered in Scotland (SC 038302). The Open University is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority.

Mae'r Brifysgol Agored yn gorfforedig drwy Siarter Brenhinol (RC000391), yn elusen a eithrir yng Nghymru a Lloegr ac yn elusen gofrestredig yn yr Alban (SC038302). Awdurdodir a rheoleiddir Y Brifysgol Agored gan yr Awdurdod Ymddygiad Ariannol.